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A Child's View of Interstellar War

by

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Prologue

It was a very lucky find. The Archeologists working near the ancient ruins of "Wall Street" discovered the cannister very much by happenstance, after overlooking it several times. The canister contained a document that predated the other finds. The document must have been written by a well educated person of the time, as it was a narrative account of the events leading up to the interstellar war. Our own scholars, after much debate, decided it was based on a document decades older than the one discovered.

Most scholars now agree that the document is a translation, although inexact, of the older document. The translator, as it is currently the consensus that the translation was made by one individual, was a person well-versed in the archaic English the original document was written in. This person was also aware of some alien terminology.

There have been heated debates among scholars as to details, such as grammar, spelling, and the meaning of some words. This version of the document has been rendered for the general public.

One would be remiss not to mention the great foresight of the translator. The individual was aware that technology was and is ever changing. therefore, within the canister was every form of digital copy known at the time. a paper copy was also included, but was unreadable after becoming degraded over time. The only copy our scholars were able to make use of was the “text” file, still in use by many of the best libraries today.

The canister, along with everything found inside of it, is on view is on view in the the Great Museum in Beijing.

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Chapter 1

Every Afternoon, Tum sat in his little tree-house, between arriving home from school and eating dinner. He wasn’t a lonely boy, but simply enjoyed his solitude. He would sit and think. He would wonder about the Universe, and his place in it. This was quite a lot for a young boy to think about, but Tum lived in interesting times. Every adult was captivated by the “sousx” coming through giant three dimensional holographic public address computers in the corporate run government designated squares. There were at least three in his town, but larger cities had many more. “Sousx” can most closely be translated into late 21st Century English as “news.” However, this is far from an exact translation. It is much more complex than that. Perhaps, terms like “propaganda” or “controlled

information" might be more apt, but these terms do not suffice either. The "sousx" also was transmitted directly on a frequency that allowed for the brain waves of most citizens to be affected directly. This varied from from person to person, and Tum himself seemed to be perfectly unaffected.

The people of Tum's town seemed to be walking through their lives trance-like, but if Tum were to speak with any of them individually, he could immediately tell whether this person or that person was in a deep trance, mildly damaged, or seemingly unaffected, like himself. Tum was always surprised at the vast number of people that seemed to be, to a greater or lesser extent, unaffected. Many had been able to, at least partially, break the trance.

The latest "sousx" everybody was paying attention to was about the most recent war, some light years away, against a planet hardly anybody could find on a map of the Universe, called "earth." Apparently, this tiny blue planet that hardly had the capacity for space travel, was considered a grave threat by the leaders of the "Xact." The closest English translation of the word "Xact" would be "association" or maybe "alliance" of several planets. Some of the planets were more cooperative with with the "Xact" than others, and there were rumors and "conspiracy theories" about how uncooperative planets were dealt with. These rumors included theories such as instigating fake revolutions to cause problems for the leadership of a troublesome planet, bribery of the leadership of such a planet, sabotage of the important assets of a planet, and far worse things too terrifying to mention. Each planet had its own name, but the people had gotten so used to the term "Xact" that it came to mean each individual planet, or the whole alliance. The names of the individual planets had long been forgotten, except perhaps in some scholarly circles, and even among the scholars - this seemed to be rather arcane knowledge.

Tum's planet once reigned supreme over the whole of this confederation, but lately there had been a tacit alliance formed between a few planets to the east on the Universal map that was starting to call Tum's planet's supremacy into question. Interstellar economists debated the financial solvency of Tum's planet, and its ability to continue as financial center of the "Xact." Some

economists argued, however, that these concerns were being greatly exaggerated. For the moment, Tum's planet remained master of the "sousx," and that was the most important element in controlling the fate of the "Xact."

Each planet had its own political structure, and Tum's, from the perspective of an earth dweller, probably seemed most like a republic of some sort, or even a parliamentary democracy. However, forms can be misleading, and in the case of Tum's planet, the real power was in the hands of a very small elite. The selected leader of the planet, and therefore "Xact," was a man called Sans. His politics were very amorphous, and he could appear to be anything the masses wanted him to be. If one wanted a man of peace, then one saw him as such. If one needed a firm leader, then one got that. And on it went.

The war "Xact" was currently fighting against....what was the name of the tiny blue planet? Oh, right - "Earth." Anyway, this planet was so backwards, Tum couldn't understand why anyone would be interested in it at all. It certainly couldn't be a threat to planets outside of its own solar system. The inhabitants, strange little bipedal creatures, seemed quite content to war on each other, and Tum thought it very likely that they would destroy themselves anyway. They couldn't possibly be a match for the "Xact" intergalactic fleet. In fact, Tum was aware of those, not being seduced by the "sousx" trance, thought these continuous interstellar wars were prolonged as another way to divert the people from all of the problems they faced on their own planets. Others went so far as to claim these wars, were in some way, a production of the "sousx." Therefore, they would not be really occurring at all. Tum thought the truth was somewhere in between, as it seemed obvious to him that there was an objective reality "sousx" could not hide. But what seemed too painfully obvious to Tum, was the disproportionate nature of the whole thing. His people's fleet could destroy "Earth" and the entire solar system it was in. So, why was this "Earth" made such a giant threat?

Well, there was still another theory proposed some not affected by the "sousx." It was the same idea no matter what form it took. Either it was put as this planet alliance was some form of what an

English speaker from “Earth” would call an empire, and so had to expand, or it was that the “Xact” needed the resources of other worlds to maintain a very corrupt system and social structure.

Although Tum was a child of barely 30 years old (a year, of course, can be very different, depending on how fast your planet rotates around a star, and spins from day to night), he knew he was not normal, and perhaps precocious. He also understood the level at which he was not affected by the “sousx.” Often times, even those unaffected by it had a difficult time even acknowledging what it was.

When “Xact” went to war, they didn’t send fleets filled with living breathing soldiers. No, all of these wars were automated. Pilotless craft, or warships if you will. Even an advanced technological society like “Xact” found it difficult to compensate for leaving the comfort of the shielding radiation belt. Oh sure, they had the capability to do it, but it was much easier to send pilotless ships. Besides, if they were to send soldiers, the soldiers might develop a certain abhorrence for war, not too mention the impact on society if and when those soldiers came back injured physically or otherwise.

Chapter 2

Tum decided one day to leave his tree house for an afternoon, and go down to the square closest to his home. He walked through the scanner where his microchip was processed for the proper security code, and the credits deducted from his parent’s account. He entered the portal from there, and was asked for his destination, except for the nearest square. See, the system was designed to take the traveler to the square unless otherwise directed, and some destinations required an extra fee (meaning also an extra scan), and

perhaps a more thorough security check (also meaning another another extra scan). A moment later, the tube he was in moved at incredible speed, and a moment or so later than that arrived at the portal stop just in front of the square.

Tum left through the portal and was scanned once more upon entering the tunnel into the square. After a short distance, he emerged into the square. The place was crowded with people and an “akkutt” was yapping at him. A very close English translation of the word would be “small pet.” The people, of course, had a glazed look in their eyes, and were trance-like, glued to the “sousx” spilling out of the Holographic monitor. Except, there were a few people, just at the edge of the square, that didn’t seem to belong with the mass of trance-like zombies. Their eyes seemed clear, and they had a certain focus about them. At first they seemed to be spaced out away from one another, slowly converging on one point. When they finally arrived at a certain point on the outer edge of the square, they discreetly moved on, on foot, which nobody really did anymore, outside the perimeter of the square. Tum was astounded by this, as he had always been under the impression that the square was a protected security zone, and certainly it must be impossible to just up and walk right out of the square.

He began to follow them, but as he came near the edge of the square, the “sousx” became distorted, and even the monitor screens momentarily dissipated.. For a moment, there was a state of chaos among the people gathered in the square. They seemed confused, and as the bewilderment grew, the crowd became mob-like, with many of the people becoming aggressive. There was some pushing and shoving. Genuine fear could be seen in the eyes of a great number of the people assembled.

Tum continued on after the small group as they walked further from the square. When he got to the edge of the square, a queasy feeling overcame him and he became weak. He could only manage to crawl past the edge. He became too ill to barely move across the edge, and it suddenly dawned on him that this was a security precaution of the square working through his microchip. He crawled backwards, away from the edge, and as he did, he became stronger and in better health again. By the time he recovered, he

could no longer see the group that somehow managed to escape beyond the edge of the square. After giving this seemingly impossible escape he had just witnessed some considerable thought, he realized the only plausible conclusion he could reach was that the entire small group of them must not be microchipped. Tum had no idea how that could be, as all the citizens, on every planet in the coalition, were microchipped at birth for reasons of inter-planetary security.

Tum sat in his tree house the next afternoon. How did the small group manage to to interupt the transmission for the entire square? Not only that, the latest “sousx” was that they were a horrible band of rogue criminals that somehow managed to distort the “sousx” throughout the entire inter-planetary “sousx” system. The leaders of Tum’s planet claimed they suspected one or two of the more eastern planets to be behind this act of sabotage.

Now, of course if the more powerful eastern planets were to be accused of sabotage, then they would simply call the accusation ridiculous, and there would be a holographic conference, which no common citizen would ever know the content of, or the deals made. Tum suspected it was to the benefit of both sides from time to time to accuse the other side of such things, whether true or not true for many reasons. He couldn’t know all the reasons for sure, but he suspected reasons could include keeping control over a planet’s population more fully, getting something one side wanted from the other, showing the ability of one side or the other to counter perceived or real threats from the offending side, or maybe actions meant as a threat - who knows really? Another thing Tum had considered was that the leaders of his own planet we're behind this. It seems to him that the “sousx” had not been perfectly maintaining control over the people in the way that was intended, which of course meant complete and total control. Tum reasoned that it could have been done as a pretext to go after this seemingly growing number of people who have broken free from to a greater or lesser extent depending on the person from the control system. But if so many had already broken out of the control system then why would the leaders expect a stunt like this to work anyway? Tum pondered this question for a long time but was unable come up with a good answer. Perhaps the leaders weren't as smart as they

pretended to be. Perhaps they had already lost control to such an extent that something drastic was called for. Or, could it simply be that the small group he witnessed that day at the square were independent operators who could even be part of a larger group that has managed to break the ties to the interplanetary social control grid.

While there was still light Tom decided to leave the comfort of his tree house and take the transport, really the only transport allowed on his planet or even the other planets of “Xact” to the one section of open natural space set aside for his town. Each town or larger city had such a space. An English speaker, or really any sentient creature of the tiny blue planet, might get the impression that this was the park, but that wasn't exactly the case. Although the people were allowed to take to transport to these areas they could only travel to the area designated for the region they lived in and once there just as in the squares if one of them attempted to venture beyond the perimeter they would experience the same fate Tum did when he tried to walk beyond the square

In fact much of the land of the entirety of “Xact”had been set aside as off limits to the people, and the official reason given was that the natural environments of the planets were being made fragile by the overuse and over exploitation of the people Tum couldn't decide whether this was true or not, but when he considered who was doing the exploiting, which to him seemed may be the powerful private conglomerates and the government they apparently controlled, the official reason caused him to be skeptical.

Momentarily and of course after all the required security scans, Tum arrived at the natural space. He really only came there because he thought this particular change of scenery might help him to think and sort things out. One central question he couldn't get out of his head - how could this group of people truly exist within the system designed by “Xact?” It seemed impossible. He was really starting to lean towards the idea that the whole thing must be some sort of inside operation carried out by exactly whom he couldn't figure. It seemed unlikely to him that any of the more eastern planets would be able to carry out such an operation. They would first have to put the operatives at great risk of which the

participants would surely be aware of because they needed to travel beyond the safety of their own radiation belts. And if any of these planets where to take care to provide protection against the radiation of space, then the expense of such an undertaking would be astronomical, so in Tum's mind that possibility was ruled out. Besides,at this particular time, as Tum could reason, the more eastern planets would have no motive for such an act. It seemed to him that the more powerful eastern planets were content to quietly consolidate their control over the less powerful ones using economic incentives and diplomacy not to mention the implied assurance of protection from the more odious plots and plans of the planets aligned with Tum's planet. For them it was more of a waiting game. Soon Tum's planet would no longer have the financial or military superiority to dominate the other planets. Tum knew they would operate as they had to if they felt threatened, but generally these eastern planets wanted calm. With calm the other planets would gravitate towards them unless conditions changed drastically.

A slight digression is now in order. For it must be mentioned that there were different levels of "sousx" for the people. This seemed to depend on how much of a role the particular individual played in society, which really meant how much of a role the person believed they played a role in society. If so, there were a few variations on a theme to choose from. This was a clever diversion. These individuals might have a an intense passion about the role they selected for themselves. It also served to keep the people divided. Yet, really there was very little at issue. In fact, the divided people should have been allies attempting to change the corrupt ruling structure of "xact." Instead, unable to break the trance, they argued and fought with each other. The individuals uninterested in such a role were provided transmissions of games and fashion to divert their attention, as well. As of late, more people were trying to find their civic role, and as Tum had discovered lately, break through the trance at some level, whether it be as Tum's case, perfectly unaffected, or some lesser degree. Tum attributed this to the deteriorating economic conditions on his planet mainly. He reasoned it must be difficult to keep people under the "sousx" influence as the objective reality was becoming too far divorced from the "sousx.' Also, as the more eastern planet's influence grew,

their “sousx” was starting to matter more.

As Tum sat by a large tree near the edge of the natural place, he caught a glimpse of something a good distance away and to his right. It was a girl, probably only slightly older than himself. He couldn’t tell for sure, so he walked in her direction to get a closer look. As he approached, trying to seem as casual as possible, he became more confident he recognized her as one of the small group that pulled off the stunt in the square. She looked up at him. “You’ll never be able to travel freely about as long as you have that chip underneath your skin,” she suddenly said. Tum, of course, was breathless. She recognized him? She knew he was trying to cross beyond the square that day, and follow her group of friends? “Yes, I know you tried to crawl beyond the square the other day. Be careful not to think too hard about one thing in my presence. I, and more to the point, others - can access some of your thoughts.Don’t worry too much. Your thoughts are more private than most.” Tum was astounded. However, he also had an uncanny skill. Under pressure, he could ask the direct questions he needed to get the answers he required. “Who are you? What do you mean by others accessing my thoughts? Who? What organization are you working for? I believe you and your friends are the ones who distorted the “sousx” the other day.” The girl laughed nervously. “Well, let’s take your questions in order. Who I am is unimportant for now. What I mean is that others, some in the leadership of “Xact,” have the ability to a greater or lesser degree, to access your thoughts. In your case, however, this ability seems very limited. Just don’t think too hard about any one thing all at once. That, they can pick up on. As for myself and my friends, I won’t yet tell you anything you don’t already know. I don’t want to put you in more danger than you’re already in.” Again, Tum stunned. “What do you mean by danger?” “Think about how you’ve been able to set to set yourself apart from the control system of the ‘sousx.’ Do you believe our leaders are happy with people who have managed that? They’ve only ignored you so far because you’ve refused to act upon what you know, or even simply speak out.” “But you and I are just children really.” “On some planets, for instance the tiny blue one, we might be considered quite far into adulthood, but that is confusing because time is measured differently depending on the planet. This is a digression anyway. You know what you know. They don’t care

about your age. And now you've tried to crawl across the security perimeter of the square. So, I would think they might be a little more interested in you. I wouldn't get too worried yet, though."

Tum was motionless. He thought for a moment about the implications of what the girl was telling him. He finally spoke. "What do I do now?" "I can't tell you what to do now. That is up to you. I will give you some advice, though. You have, whether you know it or not, the power to disable the chip inside inside you. Don't be too obvious when you think about this. Try to disguise your thoughts. You'll learn how. Once you disable the chip, their ability to limit your freedom will be greatly reduced, but so will your comfort and ability to survive within their system. If you are successful, we will most likely meet again."

She then got up and walked beyond the edge of the natural place, as though she had the freedom to go wherever she wished, whenever she wish wished. Tum thought long and hard about what the girl told him. He found himself being self-conscious about his thoughts, as he wondered how in "xact" he could both think things through, and disguise his thoughts. And how would he live if he did disable the chip. All of his credits were tied into the chip. No chip meant no food, no clothing, no ride on the transport, and nothing material he might want or need. As he considered her words, he slowly realized the transport meant nothing to him. In fact, the thing was a constraint on his ability to travel, as the girl and her group proved by moving beyond security perimeters at will. Was it simply the chip that restricted movement? Or, were there other factors? As he considered the problem of the chip, he figured out that if he held some other idea in his head, like the latest game or fashion, this would probably camouflage what he was really interested in thinking about.

As it was almost dark, he decided he had better hurry to the transport. As he was walking that way, another problem presented itself to him. He became worried for his family. He certainly didn't want any of them to be endangered because of his actions.

Tum went through the usual security steps, was in the tube, but suddenly the transport seemed to take off at the usual incredible

speed, then with an alarming jolt, stop. Tum fell against the wall of the tube, but apparently was not badly hurt. He felt a slight pain across his shoulders, and his wrists hurt some in two of his limbs because he instinctively tried to catch himself from falling. The English translations for “xact” anatomy are far from perfect, so perhaps one might say it was a slight injury of the neck, and his ankles hurt. He could hear a voice coming from somewhere demanding he stay where he was. This seemed rather obvious to Tum. A moment later, he was completely immobilized. He was standing in the middle of the tube, and could not move in the slightest even within the tube. In fact, no matter how much he willed it, he could move no part of his body. Then, mysteriously, he couldn’t see, as there seemed to be an opaque black hood, or perhaps bag, that covered first his head, and then his whole body. This was very frightening to him, but the fear only lasted a few short moments, as within an instant, the transport had taken him somewhere he had never been before. He was still unable to move, but the black covering was removed, how he wouldn’t remember, and he could see again. However, the room he was in was very dark. It was a rather small room. Tum’s intuition told him thast the room was designed to make him uncomfortable, and even afraid. Oddly at this point, he had developed a come what may attitude, and was totally unafraid. He may have felt a bit numb. The lights would slowly brighten and dim. Tum came to understand that this was also a form of conditioning. Perhaps, it was meant to be a subtle technique of torture.

Tum didn’t understand how, but from behind a barrier, like a wall or thick glass, he could hear a man’s voice. “But sir, this one has the chip.” “I don’t care. You get out there and get me some answers about that kid,” came the reply. Tum was certain he wasn’t intended to hear any of this. At that instant, the lights came on, full and bright in Tum’s eyes. He was momentarily blinded, but then could see the man in a security uniform standing in front of him. “You think an awful lot about politics,” the man stated as though this in itself were some crime. “And you don’t fit the types provided through the ‘sousx’ for that.” Tum didn’t speak. He simply stared into the distance. An earthling creature, at least one who was aware of the planet’s philosophical ideas, might have labeled Tum’s current state as stoic. “How are you hiding your thoughts so well?”

Tum didn't answer. "Are you aware of anybody within 'xact' who doesn't have the chip?" The man continued to ask what seemed like banal and pointless questions.

Tum continued to look beyond the man, off into the distance. At times, the questions were directly about Tum, his beliefs, and even his abilities.

This last part the man seemed particularly interested in. Finally, the man captured Tum's attention. "If you could bring us to any citizen that is without a chip, you and your family might find a lot of credits appear for your use." Tum ruled this idea out as soon as he considered it. However, it might serve his temporary interests to act intrigued by the offer. Of course, his main interest at the moment was gaining his freedom. "How would I do that?" Tum said.

The man was shocked that he finally got a question out of Tum. "We believe you already know how to do it. We know you tried to crawl beyond the safety of the square during the incident the other day. Of course, this was a very minor annoyance to us, and if anything, serves our purposes of bringing justice to rogues. It has really made it easier for us to be less subtle in our work. We also suspect you weren't alone in the natural space."

Tum was silent for a moment. He concentrated his brain waves around the concept as he spoke. "I thought I saw something, maybe some people, outside the square. I tried to go over there, but as you are aware, that seems quite impossible to do. Other than that, I can't really tell you anything. Yes, I suppose I like to sit and think. That's why I was in the natural place. However, as to rogues, I have no opinion what -so -ever about them."

He stopped there and waited to see if the man was concerned. He seemed to be. Tum was getting good at guarding his thoughts.

The man thought for a good long time after that. It seemed like an entirety. Then, he handed Tum a small metallic tag with a contact code number. "If you do learn anything, contact me." Tum was as suspicious of the tag as was of just about everything out of officialdom. He decided to keep the tag in one drawer at home, but

never carry it with him. This would make it seem as though he was keeping the tag, which he thought was probably another surveillance device. It would sit in a drawer surveilling nothing. Tum was still immobilized. The dark cloak enveloped him once again. This time he was fearless. Before he could understand what happened, he was back in the transport at the station near his home. He could see fine. He was able to move normally. By this time it was quite late, and he wondered if his parents would be worried about him. They were still up, obviously worried about him, but said nothing to him.

Tum was exhausted from the day's events. He went to his room and fell into a sound sleep. After school the next day, he sat in his tree house as usual. He sat there thinking, but was developing greater awareness of his ability to cloak thoughts, using a technique of dualistic thinking. In other words, he could project one set of thoughts for the status quo, and another for himself. He sat and thought into the evening.

Chapter 3

Tum had two goals upon waking that morning. One was to disable his chip. The other was to find the girl he met in the natural place. He also wanted to meet her friends and find out what the small group was about. He knew he could no longer trust the public transport, and without the chip he could travel about more freely. But he also knew without the chip he would be without credits for food, and the strange security, one of almost captivity, that the chip provided. He would have to travel on foot, and he would have to be cautious not to give himself away.

The first task, disabling the chip, would be difficult enough. Why

didn’t the girl give more information? He knew it wasn’t impossible, as he had met the girl, and the small band existed without chips. Even without their chips, it was amazing the group was able to escape detection. The people were under surveillance in many different ways.

There were the blimps as an English speaker might understand them, flying high above barely seen by the people. they were the small automated craft that appeared and disappeared, getting every section of the planet. Some of them came equipped with weapons, just in case there are any dangerous rogues to be dealt with. Of course, there are also simple camera like devices, in various locations, keeping watch over the public. Tum often wondered why all this is necessary when the people are already under the induced trance of the "sousx."

As he sat in his tree house, it started the dawn on him that to disable his chip, it must be done through mind processes. He couldn't quite pin down just how to begin. If only the girl had told him.

For hours he would begin, come to a dead end, and start over again. It had to have something to do with affecting the nerves where the chip was. But how? He experimented with different ideas, first making an attempt thinking of energy, or perhaps making the neurons overload right on the spot, on what an earthling might call his neck, which is where the chip is located.

He could feel the nerve start to tingle. No matter what he did, the chip was still active. He couldn't quite understand how he knew that, he just did. It was part of the greater awareness he was developing. He just couldn't get past a certain point in the procedure.

He came at it from different directions trying to affect different nerve groups or paths. Not being a neurosurgeon, he understood what he was doing intuitively.

It was starting to get very late but he kept at it. He could feel a tingling sensation. Then he felt something, but all at once the pain

stopped. He then knew the chip was deactivated. He became very frightened by this. There were many dangers involved. The danger of not being able to have food. The danger of putting his family in trouble. The state would surely know he wasn't using his credits. Even if he just left the security services might still visit his parents. It being very late Tum decide to go to sleep for the night.

The next morning he considered this problem for a very long time. There had to be a way to keep his family out of it.

Meanwhile on a tiny blue planet 1,000,000 miles away, Joe drinking morning coffee and listening to the radio, had a conversation. "What do you make of reports of UFO's as they've come to call them again?" This Joe asked his wife. "It sounds like tabloid stuff from 100 years ago," she replied. "Well, the president of China is about to give an address they've been talking about for weeks," Joe responded. "Do you think it could have something to do with the UFO sightings?"

Tum finally decided to get up and leave his room. He didn’t have school this day, which is just as well, because he didn’t know if he was ever going back to school, now that his chip was disabled. That was another problem. He would be scanned for his chip at school. He was wondering more and more if disabling his chip was a good idea. In fact, it was very frightening. He decided, for the first time he could remember, to go out and walk around the town. There was a certain danger in this. He would have to avoid the cameras, which seemed ubiquitous, and most of all, the drones. A feeling of terror went through him as he imagined being vaporized by a drone. He started out, being careful to avoid any main route, especially ones that would take him to the main public transports. He cut across and around corners. He felt driven to keep moving on. It being the hot season, the sun shined through the hazy red sky. Tum actually felt hot, which was unusual for his species, being used to warm temperatures and averse to cold. In fact, if one of Tum's species were exposed to cold below what on earth would be 0 degrees

Celsius, he or she would slow down, and eventually shut down.

He didn't really know where he was going, but he seemed to be drawn in the direction of the natural place. He knew he couldn't enter the natural place itself, because that would be too dangerous. There was too much monitoring going on there. It would take a long time to get near the natural place, especially since he had to take such a circuitous route.

He finally came to the edge of the natural place. He sat down in a secluded area. What was to be done now?

He sat for many hours, hoping not to be discovered, as he was thinking. As twilight came, he was getting a bit anxious about the events that had unfolded in the past several days. He tried several ways to gain insight. His main idea was to access, another skill he had developed, the brainwaves floating around through the "sousx" to see if there is anything within any of the patterns that could help him. He did this over and over, but could find nothing of use. Generally, the people were caught up in their mundane thoughts, being so damaged by the "sousx" as to have no comprehension of the servitude they've been placed in, other than that promoted conventional politics used as a diversion for divide and conquer. Although, he could feel the undercurrent of disenchantment building among the masses. As the society loses supremacy and economic conditions worsen, Tum could tell that the trajectory would continue, and society could face a variety of scenarios. Tum thought it most likely that society would simply face a breakdown of some sort. But the other possibilities he could think of were also quite likely. One of the most frightening was some form of revolt among the masses. This was frightening because he could see the state making preparations for such an event, and could tell that the authorities had no intention of being gentle.

Just as darkness was setting in, Tum was becoming very afraid. The mysterious girl he met the other day appeared. "Your family will get through this fine," she reassured him. "Remember, the authorities can access their chips and their brainwaves through the "sousx." This means that after a time of interrogation and discomfort, perhaps even some of their lesser torture techniques, the likelihood

is they will discover your family knows nothing." Although the prospects she presented were less than hopeful, he acknowledged that he would have to accept her description as the way things were for the time being. He spoke, "Well, what do I do now." "Come with me. It is lucky I found you before they did."

He had been using all the skills he had acquired to determine whether he trusted her or not. It was quite possible she had the ability to deceive him on this point, but he thought for several moments, and realized he had little recourse but to go with her. He would worry about the rest later.

Back on earth, the President of China was preparing to address the world. A large audience, understanding that events had reached such a point that some truth, or in other words, some explanation was going to have to come from the address. Joe had his radio on. He listened intently. The speech began and the translation followed. "People of the world, many of you have noticed the increase in sightings of what have come to be called UFOs. This is actually a very old term for unidentified objects in the sky. When this term was most commonly in use, it implied extraterrestrial beings were traveling from other planets in these objects to visit earth, for whatever reason. In truth, our government can not confirm or deny the validity of the claims from that time. However, we can confirm that robotic drone like craft have been discovered orbiting the earth at an extremely high altitude." Joe, in a state of shock, dropped his coffee, breaking the cup as it fell into the sink. He continued listening. "I know previous world leaders relied on deceit. We have said from the beginning that we would follow a different path, and be a truthful as circumstances allow. Therefore, we can only tell you that we do not yet know the purpose of these craft, but they are small and without a doubt pilot-less. They seem to be gathering atmospheric data about our planet. We have yet to decide whether they are dangerous, or to discern where they have been sent from. We have the capability to shoot them down, but have made no decision to do so as of yet. We think it unwise to act rashly." Joe understood the allusions to "previous world leaders" were thinly veiled attacks on the Presidents of the US. The speech was

concluding. "We have gathered a bit more intelligence than we are providing, but we don't want to speak to soon about things we are uncertain about. We will not take questions at this time, as we simply do not have answers."

Joe sat for a long time bewildered by what he had heard. These UFOs are real after all. At least, this is what the world was being told. At this moment, Joe had no reason to disbelieve anything in the President of China's speech.

Tum followed the girl through desolated areas often covered with foliage. At places, the vegetation was so thick, he had difficulty making his way through it. He was sure he was quite lost. At some point, they came to an opening that led to a rather run down neighborhood. Tum had never given much thought to the privileged background he enjoyed. The sight of what could only be called poverty distressed and embarrassed him. They walked past an open square that seemed not monitored. Yet, by the circuitous path the girl was taking, he could tell they were travelling in a way designed to avoid detection. There must have been cameras hidden somewhere in that neighborhood that Tum couldn't detect.

The neighborhood seemed quite deserted except for a small boy playing a game with a handful of stones. The boy glanced at them briefly, but paid little attention to their presence.

They continued on, coming to a verdant path. "Only walk where I walk," the girl said. "We have traps set, not only for their agents, but for their drones as well." It caused him some anxiety, for he wondered what would happen if he didn't follow her footsteps exactly. She moved very slowly, allowing him to see each step he was to take. He carefully matched each step. They came to a place that was like a tunnel. The opening was very small, and Tum wondered how a large would fit through. As it was, he was having a little difficulty fitting through, but once inside, the tunnel was much larger. It was wide enough that he and the girl could walk side by side through it. It was tall enough that he could walk upright and still have space between his head and the top of the tunnel.

After walking through the tunnel for what seemed an eternity, they finally emerged into an open space unlike anything Tum had seen first-hand. He had learned of food production areas in school, and certainly had seen pictoral representations of such things. This reminded him of one, except it was smaller and arranged in a way that seemed different from what he was shown at school or elsewhere.

A young man, probably about ten years older than Tum approached them with a rather unhappy look on his face. He pulled the girl aside and left Tum unattended for a moment. Tum could hear some of the conversation taking place between the young man and the girl."How could you bring him here like this," the young man said with a somewhat annoyed tone to his voice. "He is without the chip. He has developed some minimal abilities. The authorities are interested in him. He was able to manipulate one of the security men by hiding his brain waves, and confusing him with an alternate pattern of waves. But most of all, if I didn't bring him here, what was he to do. He was, although far progressed, somewhat at a loss about what to do next. I suppose I could have left him to starve in the streets."

They returned to where they had left Tum standing. "My name is Ilium and the girl is called Em. You may stay here with us if you like, but you will have to help with the work." Tum felt him scanning his brain waves. He attempted to use his ability to shield his brain waves, and obscure his thoughts, but he could tell it wasn't quite working like it had with others. "Don't bother," said Ilium. Your abilities are very limited compared to those you will find in this place. But as far as I can tell, you seem sincere, and for now, you are OK."

And with that, Tum was given a rather tepid approval from Ilium, whose role was as sort of a de facto leader of the place he had been brought to by Em, as Tum would very much learn during his stay.

Chapter 4

The vegetables this small band of renegades grew really had no counterpart on earth. There were a few types of what might be called root vegetables. The closest thing to these on earth would likely be potatoes. In fact, these vegetables were easy to grow, and seemed to replenish themselves yearly, no matter if it may have seemed as every last one was harvested the year before. They also grew a variety of beans, the most important being a bean that could be processed and refashioned into many different types of food, much like soy is still used on earth.

As the time passed, Tum became quite good at the work of food production. In fact, he seemed to enjoy it. He was also developing his other abilities along the lines of brain wave manipulation and thought process, and gaining mental discipline with each passing moment.

The food production zone, compared to others he had learned about, seemed small in area. If he were to pace out the perimeter, as one day he did, it would seem to be, give or take a few paces, about 500 paces to come fully back around to his starting point. The zone was rectangular, with the two sides of equal length, being of far greater lenght than the two ends. Actually, as Tum discovered, the ends weren't very many paces at all. Probably, of the 500 paces, the two ends together were about 200 paces.

Now, Tum had already seen some of the traps and defenses the group had to confound the authorities, if they were to discover the group and move on them. There were other defenses he discovered too. The small group seemed to be able, sort of in a collective way, to alter planetary brain waves just enough to cloak the little settlement. However, this ability being imperfect, they were always on guard, ready to use their physical defenses, in the event they were discovered and attacked by the state.

They also had defenses to keep the less sentient beings away from their food production area. These were more simple physical defenses. The main one was a simple sort of electrical impulse generator, just a bit beyond beyond the perimeter of the food production zone. Everytime one of these less sentient creatures, or animals as an English speaker on earth might call them, came near the the zone, it would get a jolt of electricity that would drive it away. These electrical charge impulse generators looked somewhat like earth ocean buoys. They were cone-like, but looked more like three discs, one sitting on top of the other. There was what looked like a ball shaped antenna sitting or protruding out from the top disc. These devices were set up near the corners of the food production zone perimeter. So, in this case, there were two. They were just far enough away that Tum didn't notice them at first. It wasn't until seeing them in action that he figured out what they were, but after that, it became quite obvious. He also understood, although he had never seen them, that there must be at least two or more of these devices on the other side of the property. There may even have been four more to control the ends of the property. It seemed to Tum that only the tunnel he and the girl emerged from must have been unprotected by these devices. Tume realized that unless he wanted to endure electric shock, this meant that in some ways, he was a prisoner of the group, as the tunnel was always

watched anyway. Of course, he had no idea what would happen if he did try to walk right out through the tunnel, but he had no desire to leave as he had nowhere to go anyway. And for the moment, he was enjoying his life and work in this small colony. Still, he doubted he'd be allowed to leave. If he did, he would be seen as a security risk to the small band of renegades.

Chapter 5

Most evenings, dinner consisted of some form of protein fashioned from a bean that was most like earthly soy, and one of the potato like vegetables prepared in various ways. Most of these dinners were quite good according to Tum's tastes. And as had been done on earth using soy, these cooks had had even learned how to fashion desserts from this bean which Tum found irresistible. He often found that he ate too much among his new friends, but never was forbidden from doing so. There seemed to be plenty for everybody. Just how many persons the group consisted of, Tum had difficulty figuring. He never really saw all of them together in one place. His best guess was there had to be about thirty or forty of them, with a slight majority being female. After dinner, there was a short period of relaxation for all of the residents, except those that guarded the tunnel in the evening, and likely into the night. There always was the underlying fear of being attacked by the state. During this period of relaxation, the residents took up the somewhat archaic past-time of reading. Many read texts of history written on a type of parchment Tum had never seen first-hand before. The closest thing on earth to these parchments on earth had to be the bound books read for many centuries. The type of history they read was from a point of view Tum was certain was true, but certainly not taught at his school. But actually, it was more subtle than that. The way "xact" portrayed history was quite clever as

propaganda, as glaringly obvious facts were left out, and even less obvious facts could be found if anybody bothered to look. It was just that official history was always legitimized, even though it was the victor's point of view. Sometimes, after many decades or even centuries went by, and it no longer mattered, some of the truth might come out. As the earthlings used to say, "To the victors go the spoils." But it is difficult to argue they ever got the point of that. If the renegade residents weren't reading archaic parchments, another past-time was playing games. However, the games were designed to improve their mental abilities, and therefore, would be extremely difficult to explain in earthly terms. These games had to do with discovering one thing a group of them was hiding from another group. This had to do with using their abilities to probe and access brainwaves of the opposing group, whose task it was to use varying tactics, such as throwing the seeking group off the trail with alternative brainwaves meant as red herrings. Of course, they never could fully engross themselves in this game, because most of their collective efforts had to be diverted to keeping the property cloaked and defended. So, they really couldn't put their full efforts into this game. Tum, for his part, wasn't to a level where he could play the game. He believed the others would find him no challenge at all. Tum's sleeping area was small, but nice. It had little more room than the space taken up by, what would be in earthly terms, a cot. However, there were some shelves built into one wall. On the shelves, for his provision, were some of the bound paper parchments. Some were acounts of the various wars that had occured on his home planet in the distant past. Others were more philosophical in nature. There were quite a few that were political tracts from the days when people on "xact" could still think clearly enough to write political tracts of any real value. There was also a small space next to the opening Tum had to crawl through to get into his room. Within this space were a few uniforms, all exactly alike, that Tum was issued, and was to wear especially for food production work. After the evenings passed, Tum would retire to his small room for the night. He crawled through the small opening leading into the room. Once on the other other side, he fastened the canvas like coverings, over the opening to provide himself a bit of privacy. At least, it was the the illusion of privacy, as he was certain the group was monitoring him. His cot was as much off to the side of the room as it was possible to be in such a small space. In a way,

the best description an earthling might understand is as sea sailors centuries ago might sleep in a cabin, or bunk while on ship. So, he had this space with a very low ceiling, sort of enclosed by the two end walls.

On the low part of the ceiling above his cot was a small light he use as he liked. At night, before falling asleep, he would read some of the parchments, especially the ones pertaining to history.

But some evenings, he would read philoshophical and political parchments. Although he found the political parchments the most fun to read, he had a sense he was learning more from the historical accounts, which in truth were more like critiques of the conventional "History." Still, he was always so tired at night that he couldn't stay awake long enough to read very much at one time. Perhaps, he read four or five pages at night. There were nights, however, that Tum was so captivated by what he was reading, he ignored his fatigue and read into the night. Those nights made for very long and difficult days, through which Tum could hardly stay awake.

One particular day, after a very long span of time that Tum had been staying there, a drone was detected and disabled over a wooded area beyond the little settlement. As it crashed to the ground, the community focused their mental energies on the drone in such a way as to give the state the impression that it went down simply because of mechanical failure.

Afterwards, Tum could just make out the gist of an argument between Em and Ilium. They were arguing about him. "He is a liability to us. He only has limited abilities. Do you want the next drone to discover us because of him?" said Ilium. "Well, what would you have me do? Would you like to see him starve on the streets? Perhaps you'd be happier if he was caught by the authorities and tortured until he talks? It is likely his family didn't family didn't really know anything , or they may have been tortured too." Tum had been wondering and actually quite worried about his family for some time. So, it was good to finally know that they were safe because he had been able to keep these events secret from them. "Alright. But you'll be responsible for improving his abilities so we

don't have this problem. And you need to start today." So began Tum's training with Em.

From then on, Tum worked in the food production zone in the mornings. The rest of the day he spent training his mental abilities with Em's help. The main focus was on developing his ability to use the technique of generating multiple brain wave patterns to shield his own, as to avoid detection by the the state. Em explained that although she was using oversimplifications, the basic idea was to make one's overt patterns as though they were intermingled with the overall "sousx." Most important, he must seem as though his brain wave patterns were coming from the collected patterns as a whole to give the impression he wasn't living in a colony outside of society, but was just another person going about his business in the city or the town, but of little relevance to anybody.

In fact, it would be even better if he was able to concentrate on presenting the most superficial aspect of "sousx" possible. the more superficial he could make himself appear, the less attention his patterns would generate from the state. This whole process, other than Em's coaching, required great quietude. In earthly earthly terms, the closest concept might be a form of meditation, but that only touches the surface of what was being accomplished by Tum and the others with these abilities rendered and honed properly. There was and is no way to describe it in earthly terms.

As the sessions with Em went on each day, over a short period of time, Tum began to realize he was surpassing his mentor. As he came to realize this, he was inclined to lead Em to believe she still controlled the sessions. His purpose for this was to to learn more about the colony and his situation. It wasn't exactly that he didn't trust Em and the others. Although, as of late, with his abilities developing so rapidly, his intuition was telling him something was not as it seemed with the place and the residents. He decided the best course of action was to subtly gather evidence to confirm or negate his suspicion.

During the sessions , at first very carefully, Tum would scan a tiny bit of Em's brain wave patterns. After processing each scan, and deciding whether or not Em was aware of this intrusion, which he

discerned she was not, he would scan for sets of brain waves Em was hiding. For a long time during these sessions, his scans were inconclusive. He had no further basis for his suspicion than when he started. But in time, his suspicions became more valid to him. He was never entirely clear about how much Em actually about her own role.

He began to see a picture developing withing his mind about this place, and the events that brought him here. He wasn't sure how many realized it either. Did Ilium himself know? He was seeing a picture of a camp for wayward "rogues" cleverly designed by the state, that allowed the renegades the illusion of being true dissidents, while really being prisoners of the state. Not only that, but the state also allowed them to carrt out their little stunts, like the one in the square. In essence, whether they knew it or not or not , they were working for the state. Of course, it is more complex than that. They were working for elements within the state. These elements were losing their domination over "xact." So not only was it convenient for them to allow a stunt like the one in the square to push people back into the arms of the state, but also allowed Tum's home planet to go on a search for enemies among the planets rising to power. Tum decided he had to escape. But how? He covertly gave this some thought. He knew by this very realization that he must have developed his powers further beyond those within the camp.

Chapter 6

After pondering just how he was going to make his escape, it then occured to him he didn't know where he would go if he did. How would he survive? Where would he survive? And just how would he get beyond the electrified barrier? He couldn't use the tunnel even if

he could slip by the guards. The tunnel only went back the town, and his old life. He had to hone his abilities in order to pass through the electrified barrier, and to avoid detection long enough to put some distance between himself and the place he now found himself . He would worry about how to survive after his escape.

He began scanning and accessing different levels of his brain wave patterns, attempting to leave an imprint for the colony, so they would believe he was still among them even after his escape. He didn't know how long he could maintain this illusion, but he knew he had the ability to do it for a time. He began to see he couldn't disable the electrified barrier without being detected, so he decided to focus on ways to ignore the pain it would cause as he went through. He knew he could repair his physical damage, especially nerve damage, afterwards. His mental abilities were becoming as such that he could heal his physical self to an extent. This, as with the chip, could be done by focusing on a nerve or group of nerves.

He decided to try for his escape that night. He would bring a few changes of clothes, as well as the clothes he was wearing when brought to the camp. More import though, he would bring some of the root vegetables, as he planned on eventually setting up his own property for growing crops to live on. He knew he was reaching a level where he could establish a security perimeter, and begin to develop his own homestead as it were.

That night, he walked beyond the far end of the electrified barrier, through the pain, and out to freedom.

Something about the escape seemed wrong to him. Was it his intuition again, or just an uneasy feeling about how developed his abilities had become? On the other hand, it took every bit of his mental concentration to make it out undetected, or at least it seemed. He knew that at some point in the morning, the colonists would figure it out. He hoped to be deep into the woods by then. After that, he wasn't exactly sure. He would go somewhere he could at least work the soil, and far enough from any population center that his mental abilities could shield him from detection. As he traveled, he wondered if others had ever escaped from the camp.

He continued forward, staying within the woods, scanning and processing, being alert for drones. He finally came upon an open field. He was considering the likely danger of crossing such an open space, when in the distance, on the edge of where the woods began again, off to the corner, was a shack.

Tum was quite astonished. He certainly didn't expect to find anything, or if it was inhabited, anybody out this far. Many questions came to him at once. Was this the shelter of an individual? Was it another trick of the state? Had he broken free, or was this another cell within the prison? Was the shack simply from a by-gone era? In essence, the basic question amounted to what had he really accomplished versus what was manufactured by the state?

He decided, after some consideration, that he couldn't know the answer. He decided, for the moment, he'd have to treat his escape as a real event. Otherwise, there would be no way to proceed. So, he took the shack at face value.

He made his way carefully across the field, being watchful for drones, and using the capacity of his abilities to shield his presence. As he approached the other side, he noticed that part of the field had been cultivated. There was a square patch of the potato- like vegetables. As he turned his attention away from the patch, he noticed the smoke coming out of the hearth-like chimney. He realized he had used so much energy shielding himself, that he had been ignoring his basic sense of smell. He finally could smell the chimney smoke. He knew then that somebody must live on the property.

Tum decided there was nothing else to be done but look around the corner of the shack, very carefully, as he expected he would find the door there. Slowly, cautiously, he stepped. He took a peek, only to find the door open. An old man sat inside by the hearth. He looked oddly familiar, but Tum couldn't place him. "You know who I am," the old man said suddenly. And for some reason, Tum now knew exactly who the old man was. "You're me as an old man." "That's right. Did you think that time was really linear?" "Well, I hadn't thought much about it." Then the old man asked, "Just because I'm you, does that mean you should trust me?" "Well, I don't see any

reason why I should purposefully deceive myself, so I would trust that you would tell me what you believe to be true. However, right now, I don't seem to have many options, so I'm going to trust you until I have cause not to." Though they were the same person, the old man didn't know how Tum would answer. He was impressed by the answer given. "That is a very wise answer, whether you know it or not. The first thing I'm going to do is feed you some supper, then you can sleep here for the night. In the morning, I'm going to guide you on what to do next." So, Tum not feeling threatened by his older self, spent the night sleeping on the floor of the shack with only a blanket.

The next morning Tum awoke to the old man frying thinly chopped pieces of potato-like vegetables, as well as what could be described as flat bread. Tum would later discover that the bread was made from a type of grain growing wild near by. He found the morning meal to be very much to his liking. "You know how I know you'd like that? Because I'm you and you have had this each morning for breakfast for a very long time." Tum sat quietly waiting for the old man to tell him something useful. Finally, the old man got to the point. "I came back here not long ago before you arrived. I knew I could help you, being myself, keep from a lot of trouble by catching you here. I don't expect you to understand what time is, so I'll leave it at you actually had to build this place, and you lived in it . If we were to speak of linear time, then we could say you were here for quite a long time before deciding what to do next. I've moved you along because there are important tasks to accomplish."

The old man seemed to drift off and was silent for a few moments. "You now need to follow this map exactly. This is the safe route." "I'm not sure I understand this map, " Tum said. "Well, you better start understanding it." Tum agreed to study the map carefully. Then, the old man said something Tum was skeptical of. He said, "When you get to where this map leads, there will be a woman and a man. They will be looking for you. I know you will have doubts. Even now you don't trust everything I'm saying, but you should go with them. I tried to evade them. This is all part of a longer story I'm not inclined to tell now. I will say, however, that if I had gone with them sooner, instead of forcing them to find me and convince me of their intentions, the "xact" would be a better place now. And

a lot of poor creatures on distant planets would have been saved a lot of suffering." The old man was right. Tum didn't trust everything he was saying. He did agree with many of the sentiments though. And since he was really an older version of him, or so it seemed until Tum had reason to believe otherwise, he decided to at least set a course by the map. He could always change his mind based upon what he learned as he went along.

After his meal, the older man and Tum said their good-byes, and Tum headed out on the course provided by the map. The Old man had given some of the flat bread to satisfy his hunger as he journeyed.

Night was coming quickly as he walked. The old man had even marked the best places for him to take his rest. He also, seemingly thinking of all of Tum's needs, provided Tum with a blanket, and simple sort of temporary shelter. Tum ate a dinner of flat bread, prepared his shelter for the night, and wrapped himself up in the blanket as the nights in that region were rather cold. He slept soundly enough, but even during sleep he had to maintain some awareness. He had to shield his position from detection by the state. He also had to be prepared to sense any drones that might enter the area. However, he had reached a level of mental prowess that allowed him to perform these tasks in his sleep.

He awoke the next morning, ate some of the flat bread, of which he was running out of quickly, and continued on the course set out by the map. Fortunately, it wasn't too much further to the destination set out by the old man. He figured he could make it there by evening. At times, the path was arduous. There were steep hills. there were places where he could hardly stay on, or even discern, the path. For long stretches he had to travel through the brush, as he stomped over it to make a path for himself. He had the sense he was deep in the wilderness at this point. This route was much more difficult to traverse than he imagined, so it took him longer to reach his destination than at first he thought it would.

By nightfall, he reached a small clearing beyond the edge of the woods. This was the spot on the map at which he was instructed to find the woman and the man, and go willingly into their custody.

He did doubt the old man, just as the old man knew he would, but since he truly believed he and the old man wre the same, as conflicted as he was, he had already decided to follow through with the plan laid out by his older self.

Chapter 7

There, as if on cue, a man and a woman seemed to materialize in the small clearing. "Tum," the woman said, "Come, we must go. Do not be afraid. If you come to us, it will be much easier. But it matters not at this point, for we have been through this many times with you. So, we have a very strong advantage, and it is unlikely you will decide to go against a decision you have already made." So, Tum went with the woman and the man.

Back on Earth, the President of China was feeling more than a little uneasy. He was going to have to lie to the people, even if only by omission, for the sake of "National Security." Or, in this case, planetary security. He had to keep secret his communications with the eastern planets, who were acting quite on their own in opposition to the alliances attacking force. So, for the time being, he simply informed the people that the situation was being dealt with as best as it could be, and left his shortwave briefings as cryptic as possible.

Joe was sitting at home tired from the day's work listening to the radio. "What do you make of his address now?" he asked his wife. "It reminds me of stuff American and European leaders would say decades ago. They are hiding something," she replied. Word in the street was that the Chinese were already shooting down drones.

Tum had never experienced space travel before. The voyage made him sick. He still felt ill even after reaching the outermost of the eastern planets.

"But why am I the one you need so badly? Surely there must be others who can do these things better than myself." "Well, actually Tum, there aren't." Tum found all of this a bit bewildering to say the least. How could he have abilities so far developed? What about the others at the camp? "No, Tum, we know what you're thinking, not because we can access your brain waves, but because we have been through this with you many times. Yes, you are currently the one with the most developed abilities. Please don't let that go to your head. It could be strictly by happenstance." Tum was stunned by what he was being told. He was ahead of others who had this ability, and yet he was being told to shrug it off as a fluke. So, let's go over this one more time. We have sent a shipment of detection equipment and anti-drone weapons to the earthlings. We have sent our ships by a circuitous route. We need you to do your best to cloak them if they are to have any chance of arriving. If you care about either liberty within "xact" or those poor creatures on earth, then you must do this for us."

Tum understood that the planets of the east had motives other than concern for faraway beings in providing this protection to them. It likely was the case that they would expect to exploit the resources of the tiny blue planet. But their plans were not as sinister as those of the leaders of his planet. And their plan seemed more based on working out a cooperative agreement, rather than just relying on brute force. However, he was sure they would use force as a last resort. But his planet resorted to force as a first option, without attempting peaceful means. So, in the end result, Tum agreed to help them.

As the shipment traveled further away, it became harder for Tum to keep the fleet unaware of it. Eventually, fully knowing the risks, he demanded to be allowed to voyage into space a distance towards the shipment in order to keep his leaders unable to unscramble

their brain waves enough to see it.

His handlers, after some trepidation, agreed. They sent two of their best space security agents with him. As they got further into space, Tum realized the only way to keep the shipment hidden was to get into the path between his home planet and the shipment. His handlers thought this exceedingly dangerous, but acquiesced none-the-less. From this vantage point, Tum could just about do it, but as the shipment entered the earth's atmosphere, the fleet detected it. By that time, however, the Chinese astronauts had taken possession of it, and hurriedly brought it down to the planet's surface, where it was hidden deep underground. The fleet was still too far out of range to do anything about this.

Tum realised that he had accomplished the task set out for him. The earthlings would quickly learn how to reverse engineer the equipment and weapons, perhaps even improve upon what they had been given. Their war might be difficult and long, but they had a good chance of victory, which would mean survival.

He then turned his mental abilities on his handlers in the ship. First he scrambled their brain waves. He then reprogrammed their thoughts to make them believe they should take Tum to a planet unconquered by the "xact" yet as livable and as uninhabited as possible. Through scanning their brain waves, he found they knew of such a planet. He also encouraged them to believe this was what they wanted too. He sheilded his craft from the whole of "xact" the best he could. But, he suspected there were those with power in the east who simply let him go.